

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Elizabeth Esty
221 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Esty:

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose proposals that would politicize the charitable nonprofit and philanthropic community by repealing or weakening current federal tax law protections that prohibit 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates.

Nonpartisanship is a cornerstone principle that has strengthened the public's trust of the charitable community. In exchange for enjoying tax-exempt status and the ability to receive tax-deductible contributions, 501(c)(3) organizations – charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, and foundations – agree to not engage in “any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.”

That provision of law protects the integrity and independence of charitable nonprofits and foundations. It shields the entire 501(c)(3) community against the rancor of partisan politics so the charitable community can be a safe haven where individuals of all beliefs come together to solve community problems free from partisan divisions. It screens out doubts and suspicions regarding ulterior partisan motives of charitable organizations, as undoubtedly would occur if even just a few charitable organizations engaged in partisan politics. Nonpartisan credibility is critical to the ability of 501(c)(3) organizations to work with elected officials of all parties at the local, state, and federal levels to address community needs.

Charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, are free to speak on important matters of the day and advocate on public policy issues and legislation. Private foundations, while barred from most lobbying activities, are free to engage in public debates, promote public education efforts, and fund a wide range of issue-focused activities. The relevant language in Section 501(c)(3) merely prohibits partisan campaign intervention, defined to include endorsing or opposing candidates for public office, publishing or distributing statements for or against candidates, or using tax-deductible and other resources to support partisan campaign activities.

We are united in opposing any and all efforts to weaken or repeal this longstanding protection in the federal tax code (sometimes called the Johnson Amendment) that President Eisenhower signed into law in 1954. Weakening the law by allowing leaders of individual 501(c)(3) entities to endorse candidates for public office and engage in some partisan electioneering activities would damage the integrity and effectiveness of all charitable organizations and spawn litigation as innovative partisans seek to expand gray areas in the proposed legislation. Repealing the Johnson Amendment, an approach promoted by the President and some in Congress, would damage the federal Treasury as people take tax deductions for political contributions they could then funnel through charitable nonprofits, undercut fair elections by providing a loophole to avoid campaign contribution disclosure laws, and empower politicians to exert pressure for access to foundation assets and charitable funds for their own partisan campaigns rather than for the public good.

We urge you to join us in opposing efforts to weaken and/or repeal the current law that for six decades has successfully protected the integrity and effectiveness of charitable nonprofits and foundations by keeping them apart from partisan politics.

Respectfully,

Connecticut Organizations			
Almada Lodge - Times Farm Camp Corp. (d/b/a Channel 3 Kids Camp)	Andover	Community Renewal Team	Hartford
American School for the Deaf	West Hartford	Community Residences Inc.	Newington
Annie C. Courtney Foundation, Inc.	Waterbury	Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families, Inc.	Connecticut
ARC of Greater New Haven	Hamden	Connecticut Association for the Gifted	Stamford
Arc of Meriden Wallingford, Inc.	Meriden	Connecticut Community Foundation	Waterbury
ARCGH		Connecticut Council for Philanthropy	Hartford
ARI of Connecticut, Inc.	Stamford	Connecticut Forest & Park Association	Rockfall
Autism Services and Resources Connecticut	Wallingford	Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.	Middletown
Benhaven	North Haven	Creative Arts Workshop	New Haven
Beth-El Center, Inc.	Milford	CSSD Judicial branch	New Haven
Bethsaida Community, Inc.	Norwich	CT Association of Area Agencies on Aging	Hartford
BHcare	North Haven	CT Coalition on Aging (CCOA)	New Haven
Brass City Harvest, Inc.	Waterbury	CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance)	
Bridgemill Foundation	New Canaan	CT State Independent Living Council	Farmington
Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition	Bridgeport	Disability Rights Connecticut, Inc.	
Bridges	Milford	Domus Kids Inc.	Stamford
Boroughs Community Center	Bridgeport	E. Brown Trust	
CARE		Easter Seals-Greater Waterbury	Waterbury
Catholic Charities - Archdiocese of Hartford	Hartford	Fairfield County's Community Foundation	Norwalk
Catholic Charities of Fairfield County	Bridgeport	Families Network of Western Connecticut, Inc.	Danbury
CCARC, Inc.	New Britain	Family Centered Services of CT, Inc.	New Haven
Center for Latino Progress - CPRF	Hartford	First Choice Health Centers, Inc.	East Hartford
Children's Fund of CT	Farmington	FreeTHEM Foundation, Inc.	Waterbury
Christian Community Action, Inc.	New Haven	Friends of Autistic People	Greenwich
Clifford Beers Clinic	New Haven	Futures, Inc.	Berlin
CNV Help, Inc.	Waterbury	Guardian Ad Litem Services, Inc.	Southbury
Columbus House Inc.	New Haven	Harc, Inc.	Hartford
Communication Advocacy Network, Inc.	Hartford	Hartford Behavioral Health	Hartford
Community Child Guidance Clinic	Manchester	Hartford Performs	Hartford
Community Enterprises, Inc.		Homes with Hope	Westport
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut	New London	Hope4homeless	west haven
Community Foundation of Greater New Britain, CT	New Britain	Horizons National	Westport
Community Health Resources	Windsor	Horizons Programs Inc.	South Windham
Community of the Cross Ministries, Inc.		InterCommunity	East Hartford
Community Partners in Action	Hartford	Ironwood Community Partners	Bloomfield
		James H. Napier Foundation	Meriden
		Jewish Association for Community Living	Hartford

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Journey Found		The McCall Center for Behavioral Health	Torrington
Keystone House, Inc.	Norwalk	The New Haven Oratorio Choir, Inc.	New Haven
Klingberg Family Centers		The Open Door Shelter, Inc.	Norwalk
La Grua Center	Stonington	The Open Hearth Association	
LifeBridge Community Services	Bridgeport	The Prentice Foundation	Fairfield
MARC Community Resources	Middletown	The Tow Foundation	New Canaan
Mental Health Connecticut, Inc.	West Hartford	The Vantage Group, Inc.	Wallingford
Mid-Western Connecticut Council of Alcoholism		There's No Place like Home, Inc.	New Haven
Mosaic		UCP of Eastern Connecticut	Quaker Hill
NAMI Connecticut	Hartford	United Way of Connecticut	Rocky Hill
Neighbor to Neighbor	Greenwich	United Way of Western CT	Danbury
NetMark Associates	Canton	VNA Community Healthcare	
Network, Inc.	Andover	West Haven Emergency Assistance Taskforce	West Haven
North Central Regional Mental Health Board Inc.	Hartford	Westport Arts Center	
Northwest Connecticut Arts Council	Torrington	Wheeler Clinic, Inc.	Plainville
Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation	Falls Village	Wintonbury Land Trust	Bloomfield
Nutmeg Statewide PTA	Ridgefield	Women's Center of Greater Danbury	Danbury
Oak Hill		Young Haven Sibling Support	West Haven
Operation Fuel, Inc.	Hartford	Youth Continuum- FREE Program	New Haven
Our Piece of the Pie, Inc.	Hartford		
Pathways/Senderos Center	New Britain		
Prime Time House	Torrington		
Project Youth Court	New Haven		
Re-Entry Assisted Community Housing (REACH)	New Haven		
Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership	Bridgeport		
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice of Connecticut	New Haven		
ROSCCO Stamford School Community Organization, Inc.	Stamford		
Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury	Waterbury		
SARAH Tuxis Residential & Community Resources, Inc.	Guilford		
Shoreline Arts Alliance	Guilford		
Shoreline Wellness and Behavioral Clinic	West Haven		
Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities, Inc.	Westport		
Solar Youth, Inc.	New Haven		
Spearpoint Strategy Advisors, LLC	Warren		
StayWell Health Care, Inc.	Waterbury		
The Access Agency, Inc.	Willimantic		
The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum	Ridgefield		
The Arc of Litchfield County	Torrington		
The Arc of Southington	Southington		
The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport	Bridgeport		

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
American Alliance of Museums
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of Teachers of German
American Bladder Cancer Society
American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
American Brass Chamber Music Association
American Conference of Academic Deans
American Heart Association
American Historical Association
American Jewish Committee
American Medical Association Foundation
American Physiological Society
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
American Red Cross
Americans for the Arts
Americans Promoting Study Abroad
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Amyloidosis Foundation
Annie E. Casey Foundation

Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
Association of Fundraising Professionals
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Nature Center Administrators
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Baptist Women in Ministry
Barr Foundation
BoardSource
Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
Camp Fire
Campion Foundation
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Mobilizing Network
Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Center for Inquiry
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Citizen Schools
CleanSlateNow
Commonwealth Fund
Council on Foundations
Council for Global Equality
Dance USA
Dementia Society, Inc.
Democracy 21
Destination & Travel Foundation
Dietel Partners, LLC
Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
Ecology Project International
Engineering Conferences International
Feed the Children
Feeding America
Food & Water Watch
Ford Foundation
Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
Free Press
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Global Integrity
Goodwill Industries, International
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
Greater Nonprofits
GuideStar
Habitat for Humanity International
Harbor Compliance
HawkWatch International
Hindu American Foundation
Histiocytosis Foundation
Horizons National
Human Science Institute
Independent Sector
International Essential Tremor Foundation
International Hearing Dog, Inc.
International Performing Arts for Youth
International Primate Protection League
Issue One
Jessie Ball DuPont Fund
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federations of North America
Leadership USA
League of American Orchestras
League of Women Voters
Leukemia Research Foundation
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education
Lumina Foundation
Lymphoma Foundation of America
Migraine Research Foundation
Mentors International
Morino Ventures, LLC
National Association of Charitable Gift Planners
National Association of Health Data Organizations
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)
National Association of Watch and Collectors
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Center for Fire and Life Safety
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
National Council of Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
National Council of Nonprofits
National Dance Education Organization
National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence
National Human Services Assembly
National Indian Child Welfare Association
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation
National Runaway Safeline
National Safe Place Network
National Tongan American Society

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NEO Law Group
North American Bramble Growers Research
Foundation
OPERA America
Partnership for America's Children
Pension Fund of the Christian Church
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement
Project Wet Foundation
Project Managers Without Borders
Public Citizen
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Secular Coalition for America
Senior Executives Association
Seva Foundation
Skillman Foundation
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Smith's Food and Drug
Social Velocity
The Arc of the United States
The Aspen Institute
The Commonwealth Fund
The Dibble Institute
The Educational Foundation of America
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
The Voter Participation Center
TIDES
Unemployment Services Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
United Way Worldwide
University Professional & Continuing Education
Association
US Lacrosse
Vasculitis Foundation
Volunteers of America
Voto Latino
Wallace Global Fund
WasteWater Education
Weingart Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Words Without Borders
World Day of Prayer USA
World Neighbors, Inc.
Youth Services America
YWCA USA